

missing

An Essay
upon
Alcoholic Stimulants.

their uses and abuses
Respectfully Submitted to the Faculty
of the
Homoeopathic Medical College
of Pennsylvania.

For the Degree of Doctor of Medicine
by
Syvanus Harris
of
England

Philadelphia Feb. 1. 1861.

In the following Essay I propose
to show the effects of Alcohol upon the
human organization when taken as
a medicine, which may be considered its
use, and also when taken in health as
a beverage, which may be called its abuse.
Medicinally it may be advantageously
used in many ways. In gastrodynia,
cramp colic, or flatulency, it may prove
useful, provided no better homeopathic
remedy be at hand. In cases of
dyspepsia where the disease appears
to be as it were congenital, & not
the result of abuse of the digestive
organs, the use of some of the milder
forms of alcoholic Stimuli may be
resorted to and even continued for a
very long time, perhaps through life.

better means can be found than
an alcoholic Stimulant, although
this must be administered with
the greatest care lest by giving
too much, its stimulating Effect
be exceeded and the sedative
Effect produced, which would leave
the patient then, in a worse condition
than if he had been left to Nature.

Again the greatest care must be
exercised to ascertain as far as
practicable the precise nature of
the injury which has occasioned
the fainting, as the administration
of a Stimulus in many such cases
might prove fatal. For example,
a small blood vessel in the head
has been ruptured, by a fall, blow,

or other violence, the patient lies pale,
and shrunken, if left alone, Nature
will gradually in a short time
heal up the small vessel without
much, if any escape of blood. Whereas
if a stimulant be injudiciously
administered, the circulation is
increased, the ruptured vein is not
allowed to heal, blood is poured
out upon the brain, and the
patient dies from the effects of
the remedy rather than of the injury.

The weaker kinds of alcoholic
beverages as malt liquors & wine
are very useful in cases of profuse
discharge, such as accompanying
carbuncle, or any large suppurating
sore, in patients of a cachectic disposi-

tion, when the discharge is accompanied with hectic fever.

Stimulants may also be of Essential benefit in the advanced stages of inflammation Especially of the internal organs. Also in the nervous depression attendant upon many fevers as typhus and typhoid, the continued use of small quantities of wine or brandy will be found to have a most happy Effect.

The administration of alcohol in Medicine is generally in small and repeated doses, so as to keep up the stimulating, without reaching the sedative Effect.

The only exceptions to this rule

are, in the bites of Serpents as
mentioned above, or occasionally
in cases of great loss of blood
as in flooding.

If I have not in the foregoing
given all the medicinal uses
of alcohol, I have certainly
said enough to show that it holds
an important place as a remedial
agent, one although much more
in vogue among the practitioners
of the old school, than among
ourselves, I believe no homoeopath
could do wisely without.

It is a curious fact connected
with the use of alcohol, that
habitual drunkards are very
seldom indeed affected with

tubercular phthisis. In the
bodies of nearly seventy drunkards
examined in New York in 1842-43
"Not one tubercular abscess was
met with even of the smallest
size while a small number of
chalky or obsolete tubercles was
frequently noticed".

I will now proceed to the second
part of my essay its use as a
beverage or in other words, its
abuse.

As an article of food, or an
adjunct to a meal, it surely
gives a spur to the system which
is attended by a corresponding
reaction, and as it has the
power according to Puffin of

Coagulating the albuminous portions
of the contents of the stomach,
it must greatly interfere with, if
not altogether put a stop to the
process of digestion, so long as it
remains unabsorbed in the stomach.

As to its power of sustaining
under bodily or mental labor
Experience has shown in all climates
that a greater amount of Ether
can be sustained when totally
abstaining from it. Labor Ether
Bodily or Mental involves a wasting
or disintegration of tissues which
can only be supplied by food
and rest, it is true that the use
of a stimulus gives a temporary
impetus, but this is followed

by a depression, leaving a still
larger waste to be made up.

The alcohol gives no substance
to either of the decaying tissues
but only stimulates the nervous
to force on the muscular to
do more work than it ought.

With regard to mental labor
the same remarks apply the
brain being stimulated to an
amount of overwork without the
power of making up for the
additional waste.

As a help, in the support of
extremes of temperature it has
many advocates, but here its
efficacy can be proved to be
null void. Thelung Casagay

of liver complaints and others
occurring amongst Europeans, more
especially Englishmen, residing
in India and other tropical climates
may be mainly attributed to their
almost perpetual use of alcoholic
and other stimulants, whilst the
natives of those countries and those
Europeans residing there too poor
to afford such so called luxuries
are entirely exempt from them.

The experience of all the
Arctic navigators and those
engaged in the whale fishery
in extreme northern latitudes
shows that a greater amount
of continued cold can be
endured by those who never

Touch these beverages, although
much benefit might be derived
from the use of spirits by a person
exposed to an intense degree of
cold for a short time, the reason
of this is obvious, the alcohol
produces heat by its steady
oxidation in the lungs, but
as this would interfere with
the removal of the effete or
waste matter from the system,
it could not be continued for
any length of time, without
interfering greatly with the
economy of the whole system.
I have thus in a very brief
way endeavored to show that
Alcohol is inefficacious for

the three purposes for which it
is mostly taken. Namely.

- 1st. As an article of food
- 2nd. As a supporter of labor
- 3rd. As a supporter of the
vicissitudes of climate.

Now let us lastly glance at a
few of its bad effects. and their
name alas is Legion.

Common intoxication is too frequent
to need description from me here it
takes a thousand forms according
to the temperament, Some are
Elated, Some Moody, Some quarrelsome,
but all dejected and miserable when
the stimulus has died away, and
reaction sets in.

The ingestion of a very large quantity

of Alcohol into the system causes almost immediate death.

The continued use of Even small quantities of Stimulants of this kind, predisposes to the attacks of all zymotic complaints, and drinkers are infinitely more liable to chronic diseases in after life than the temperate, Such as fatty degeneration of the heart's Muscular Substance, of the walls of the arteries, and of the glandular substance of the Kidneys Liver. Bright's disease of the Kidney, and Nutmeg liver, are generally met with amongst this unhappy class. Alcohol being so very readily oxidized

in the lungs, must interfere very materially with the removal of this Effete Matter from the system.

Another state into which the unhappy drinker not unfrequently falls, is that known as "Alcoholismus Chronicus". Here the Alcohol though perhaps never taken in intoxicating doses, has as it were, cumulated in the system. The limbs, hands, body & tongue of the poor wretch tremble, Inordinant Sensations affect the skin, the mind is weak, the spirits gone, strength, appetite, sleep are all impaired or gone, the only relief is the temporary one afforded by drinking more, and

Even this at last fails, he lives
for a while upon the Stimulant
until Epilepsy or some kindred
disease puts an end to his
wretched existence.

Thus much for the body now
how does it act upon the mind?
Its invariable effect even in
small doses is to blunt the
moral sensibilities, and to
rouse all the animal passions
hardly a crime is committed
in which this agent has not
some hand. Mahommed
says in the Koran that "wine
is a mother of sins."
Although many great men
of this, and other countries

have been drinkers, many of them
very hard drinkers, this goes to
prove nothing in its favor, they
might, and in all probability
would have been, better men
without it. Few men who
habitually use much stimulus
are remarkable for activity of mind
or brilliancy of intellect.

But its most marked effects
are in the following diseases of
the mind, Delirium tremens
which generally occurs after a
debauch or after a sudden
accident, or great loss of blood.
Even in a comparatively moderate
drinker. This is a Mania
differing very much in different

persons, in all however the appetite
is entirely gone, the nerves rushing
delusions of a thousand different
characters prey upon the mind
of the unfortunate individual
afflicted. One peculiar feature
in this kind of madness is
that the patient amongst other
things almost always imagines
himself surrounded by vermin
of every description, flies, rats,
snakes, lizards, & the like.
Another form perhaps the
most terrible is Mania a potu
or Delirium Eriosum, this
comes on after the man has
become sober, that is to say
no longer under the influence of

liquor, it is of a most horrible
and dangerous kind, the poor
victim having to be restrained
to prevent violence and hurt to
himself & others, it often changes
its character into that of a confirmed
and hopeless mental disease.

Another and the last effect
of Alcohol at which I shall
have space to glance within the
limits of this thesis is that
known by the name of *Crimania*
this though not always occurring
in drunkards, can never occur
in a person who has never used
alcoholic stimulants.

It consists of a most irresistible
craving for ardent spirit, the

victim. mallowing them as fast
as he can and often keeping
drunk for days & weeks together.
During the intervals between these
paroxysms, he is sober and trust
worthy, but the poison once tasted
he cannot refrain. One who
was thus afflicted said.
"If a bottle of brandy stood
at one end of the table and the
pit of hell yawned at the other
and I were convinced I should
be pushed in as soon as I took
one glass, I could not refrain."
I knew a gentleman at the
Cape of Good Hope whose wife
was afflicted with this Malady
She would steal from his side

at night, and go down into his
shop (a drug store) and there
drink alcohol, Eau de Cologne,
or anything intoxicating she
could find until she became
entirely insensible. In her case
the disease was brought about by
her having been prescribed a glass
of sherry wine daily, as a tonic.

In concluding this Essay I
feel that it is impossible within
so narrow a space to give more
than a glance at this interesting
subject, and that I have
left very much unsaid both
as to the uses and abuses of
stimulating drinks, more
especially the latter, for I

Hardly believe there is hardly
a disease acute or chronic
which is not aggravated by
its symptoms by the patient
having habituated himself
to the use of these deterring
beverage, and hardly a crime
or misery upon the face of
the Earth more especially
amongst our own Anglo-Saxon
race that cannot be directly
or indirectly traced to this
down. It is true that these
results spring from our indul-
gence, but moderate drinking
will inevitably lead to excess
there is no dividing line between
them, no one begins to drink

with the intention of becoming
a drunkard.

In view of the foregoing facts
that except in a medicinal
point of view, no good can
be derived in any way from
the use of Stimulants, but on
the other hand a long
train of Evils, bodily & mental
follow its use, does it not
behoove every father to warn
his children, Every physician
to warn his patients of the
fearful risk they run by
trifling with such a danger.

Sylvanus Harris
Philadelphia Feb 21. 1861.